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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA DAS JACOBSON, MEX LEE AND PPC NSC FOR RESTREPO AND O'REILLY
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PASS TO AMCONSUL RECIFE
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PASS TO AMCONSUL QUEBEC
AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PASS TO AMEMBASSY GRENADA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2020/02/23

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SUBJECT: Mexico's Latin American Summit (22-23 Feb) -- Pushing Rio Group Mechanism to take over CALC

DERIVED FROM: DSCG 05-1 B, D

¶1. (C) Summary: Rio Group President Mexico is hosting a summit of Latin American leaders in Cancun on 22-23 February, in an effort to extend the Rio Group's reach and provide a "more operational" forum that would integrate its members and all CARICOM countries, behind a comprehensive regional agenda. The Mexicans want to give the Rio Group more legs without undermining the Organization of American States (OAS). Brazil is supportive of the idea but is reportedly seeking to retain its own earlier initiative, the Latin American Summit on Integration and Development (CALC)., while Venezuela and other ALBA countries are exploiting the meeting to promote a well-known anti-American agenda, i.e. protesting U.S. bases in Colombia and calling for the dissolution of the OAS. Foreign Ministry sources continue to tell us progress is being made on an end-of-summit declaration that will establish an agenda of priorities for the new structure -- social development, security, economic integration and combating poverty - without bloating its bureaucracy. Press reports are playing up ALBA mischief, noting the failure of Foreign Ministers' to close on the final declaration, or even agree on a name for the new regional structure. End Summary

¶2. (C) Rio Group Foreign Ministers met in the Mexican resort town of Cancun over the weekend (February 20-21) to prepare for a "Latin America Unity Summit" that would launch a new enhanced Rio Group that, together with all CARICOM countries, would be prepared to move forward on an agenda of regional priorities. Press reports played up the absence of Venezuela and other ALBA countries in the Ministerial opening and the lack of agreement on a name for the new entity. President Calderon hosted CARICOM leaders on Sunday (February 21) for a Mexico-CARICOM Summit while Foreign Secretary Espinoza continued to work to resolve differences in the Declaration language and pushed themes of regional unity in the Mexican press. As Rio Group and CARICOM Presidents converged on Cancun for a series of meetings focused on Haiti reconstruction, the reintegration of Honduras and recognition of the Lobo government, and other regional headlines, there were continued reports of difficulties in reaching agreement on the details of the new organization.

¶3. (C) Gustavo Martinez, in the SRE's Directorate for Regional Organisms and Mechanisms, told us that the priority agenda items in the declaration would focus on pressing regional issues and larger longer-term goals, e.g., security, social development, economic integration and the eradication of poverty. Martinez said it was not Mexico's intention to undermine either CARICOM or the

Organization of American States (OAS). There were topics, however, such as the Colombian bombing of FARC positions in Ecuador, where a standstill in the OAS had been overcome in a Latin American regional setting. It was Mexico's hope that a more effective regional forum might open up opportunities for practical compromise on Honduras, Haiti and other complicated issues and help translate regional priorities into effective positions in other international fora.

14. (C) Beatrice Tinajero in the Office of President Calderon's foreign policy advisor, Rafael Fernandez de Castro, observed that Mexico was making progress in working out details on the new group with various countries, including with the Brazilians on their concern on how the CALC would be subsumed into the new structure. Tinajero said that Mexico believed that both the Rio Group and the CALC could not presently translate regional concerns into effective international action. Tinajero said that while Mexico was working with Brazil and others to use the meeting to reintegrate Honduras back into the Rio Group, and would push for that result in the final declaration, it had not invited Honduras to the Summit for fear of losing the participation of the ALBA countries.

15. (C) Comment: We will be pulsing our government and Latin American Embassy sources over the next week in an effort to provide more details on Mexico's regional initiative. Rio Group and

MEXICO 00000123 002 OF 002

CARICOM countries may want to report on reactions and concerns from capitals as delegations return from Mexico's Latin America Unity Summit. End Comment

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